

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5074

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 11430

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, TH

SUBJECT: STUDENT BOYCOTT AT CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

REF: BANGKOK 9569

SUMMARY: CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY ENGINEERING STUDENTS BEGAN A SIT-IN JULY 20 AGAINST THE RTG PRACTICE OF PLACING MILITARY CADETS IN UNIVERSITIES FOR TECHNICAL TRAINING WITHOUT THEIR HAVING PASSED THE USUAL ENTRANCE EXAMINATION(REFTEL). AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF STUDENT PROTEST, THE RTG AGREED JULY 24 TO ALLOW THE UNIVERSITIES TO DETERMINE IN THE FUTURE WHAT EXCEPTIONS, IF ANY, WOULD BE MADE TO THE USUAL ENTRANCE PROCEDURES. THE STUDENTS WENT BACK TO CLASS JULY 25 WITHOUT EITHER SIDE LOSING FACE. END SUMMARY.

1. STUDENTS AT THE ENGINEERING FACULTY OF CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY BEGAN A SIT-IN JULY 20 OVER THE RTG PROGRAM OF PLACING MILITARY CADETS IN THE CIVILIAN UNIVERSITIES FOR TECHNICAL TRAINING WITHOUT THEIR HAVING PASSED THE USUAL EXAMINATIONS. A REPORTED 12,000 CHULA STUDENTS FROM ALL FACULTIES BOYCOTTED THEIR CLASSES
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JULY 23. VIRTUALLY NOBODY ATTENDED CLASS. AN ESTIMATED

4000 STUDENTS ATTENDED A DAYTIME ON-CAMPUS RALLY, BUT
DISPERSED BY LATE AFTERNOON.

2. A MERE 300-400 STUDENTS ATTENDED A RALLY ON THE
CHULA CAMPUS JULY 24. THE STATED PURPOSE WAS TO
AWAIT AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN EXPECTED CABINET DECISION
ON A THREE-POINT PROPOSAL MADE BY THE NATIONAL STUDENT
CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) TO END THE UNWANTED PRACTICE.
THE NSCT DEMANDED THAT THE MILITARY GIVE SCHOLARSHIPS
ONLY TO THOSE WHO PASS THE USUAL EXAMS; THAT THE
DEFENSE MINISTRY RECRUIT MORE CIVILIAN GRADUATES INTO
THE MILITARY; AND THAT THE MILITARY BORROW PRO-
FESSORS AND TEACHING AIDS AS NECESSARY FROM THE UNIVER-
SITIES TO GIVE THE SAME INSTRUCTION IN THE MILITARY
ACADEMY OR OTHER MILITARY SCHOOLS. CHULALONGKORN
STUDENT LEADERS ORGANIZED THE RALLY. NSCT LEADERS,
INCLUDING NEWLY ELECTED SECRETARY GENERAL SOMBAT
THAMRONGTHANYAWONGSE, ATTENDED AND SUPPORTED IT.
SUCCESSIVE DEADLINES SET BY THE STUDENTS FOR THE RTG
ANNOUNCEMENT CAME AND WENT WITHOUT AVAIL AND WITH LITTLE
CONCRETE INDICATION THAT THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP IN-
TENDED TO MAKE A DECIDED STAND OR TO ESCALATE TACTICS TO FORCE
THE GOVERNMENT'S HAND.

3. THE CABINET ANNOUNCED LATE IN THE AFTERNOON OF
JULY 24 THAT HENCEFORTH THE ADMISSION OF STUDENTS WHO
HAD NOT PASSED THE REGULAR EXAMS WOULD BE DETERMINED
BY THE INDIVIDUAL UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATIONS. CADETS
ALREADY IN THE UNIVERSITIES WILL REMAIN. THIS DECISION
SATISFIED THE STUDENTS ENOUGH TO END THEIR DEMONSTRATION,
BUT DID NOT ADDRESS THEIR THREE-POINT PROPOSAL
OUTLINED ABOVE. THIS LEAVES OPEN THE POSSIBILITY
THAT THE STUDENTS CAN REIGNITE THE ISSUE SOME TIME IN THE
FUTURE. CHULA WAS OPEN FOR CLASSES AS USUAL JULY 25.

4. COMMENT: PRIOR TO THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION,
THE INDICATIONS WERE THAT THE STUDENTS PROBABLY WOULD
NOT HAVE GONE TO THE HILT OVER THIS ISSUE, AND WOULD
ULTIMATELY HAVE BACKED DOWN. PRESS SUPPORT WAS
SLOW IN COMING, AND PEAKED ON JULY 25 AFTER THE PROBLEM
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HAD ALREADY BEEN DEFUSED. IN ANY CASE, UNLIKE THE
JUNE DEMONSTRATIONS, BOTH THE STUDENTS AND THE GOVERN-
MENT EMERGE FROM THIS ONE LOOKING GOOD. END COMMENT.
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